The Persistence of Toxic and Unethical Leadership: How Does the US Army Improve Leader Development and Selection?

A Monograph

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Abstract

The Persistence of Toxic and Unethical Leadership: How Does the US Army Improve Leader Development and Selection, by Major Marcus White, 36 pages.

Statistics show that toxic and unethical leadership is a problem in the US Army and leadership research concludes that this problem has a negative effect on the conduct of mission command. This monograph asks what the US Army can do to better reduce toxic and unethical leadership and develop officers to optimize the force for mission command. To do so the monograph examines the leader development and evaluation systems and, based on findings from those examinations, makes two recommendations to improve the US Army's performance in selecting leaders. The first recommendation is to add additional accountability to the conduct of individual assessments within the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback program, bringing the individual assessment in line with the Commander 360 assessment. The second recommendation is to use multi-rater feedback concerning the ability to conduct mission command from the Commander 360 as a component of selection for command. The monograph closes with a discussion of potential obstacles to implementation of the recommendations.

Contents

Acronyms

ADP   Army Doctrine Publication

ADRP   Army Doctrine Reference Publication

AKO   Army Knowledge On-line

AR   Army Regulation

CAC   Combined Arms Center

CEO   Chief Executive Officer

CGSC   Command and General Staff College

COL   Colonel

CSL   Central Selection List

DA   Department of the Army

CAL   Center for Army Leadership

CASAL   Center for Army Leadership, Annual Survey of Army Leadership

HRC   Human Resources Command

LTC   Lieutenant Colonel

MRF   Multi-Rater Feedback

MSAF   Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback

OER   Officer Evaluation Report

PME   Professional Military Education

TRADOC   Training and Doctrine Command

USR   Unit Status Report

Introduction

One needs only a passing familiarity with the splash page of *Army Times* to recognize the Army's problem with toxic and unethical leadership. An unending string of reliefs, from battalion command-level lieutenant colonels to four-star generals, continues to call into question the Army's ability to select qualified leaders. Since 2003,the Army has removed ninety-eight lieutenant colonel-level commanders and thirty-six colonel-level commanders from command positions.[1] Various levels of misconduct also force the Army to remove many general officers and senior civilian defense officials. The Army's Human Resources Command (HRC) tracks four broad categories for relief; performance, command climate, misconduct, and inappropriate relationships.[2] Of these categories, one could only describe performance as not fitting inside the definition of toxic and unethical. While the percentage of reliefs vary slightly year to year, the overall rate of the reliefs and their causes are remarkably consistent over this twelve-year time span. The Army should be concerned with this consistency in rate and cause. It indicates either an insoluble problem, or a problem that the Army does not fully understand. Further, this leadership problem is likely larger than indicated solely by the number of reliefs as it is almost a certainty that the Army does not relieve 100% of its toxic leaders.

The 2011 Center for Army Leadership (CAL) *Technical Report 2011-3* finds estimates of toxic leadership in the Army range to twenty percent, with nearly one in five respondents viewing their direct supervisor as toxic and unethical.[3] A further eighty-three percent of respondents said they had witnessed episodes of toxic leadership in the past year. Retired Lieutenant General

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[1] Army Times, "129 Army Battalion, Brigade Commanders Fired since 2003," *Army Times*, accessed April 1, 2015, http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/officer/2015/02/02/129-army-battalion-brigade-commanders-fired-since-2003/22531897/.

[2] Official data provided by COL Lane Turner, Chief, Human Resources Command (AHRC-PDV-PO), Command Management Branch.

[3] Jon Falleson et al., "2011 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership: Main Findings" (Government Printing Office, 2012), 22.

Walter Ulmer, a long-time commenter on military leadership and former CEO of the Center for Creative Leadership, recently wrote of the Army, "the toxic leader phenomenon is a slowly growing organizational cancer."[4] A headline from 2013 clearly demonstrated how Army Chief of Staff, General Ray Odierno, feels about the issue; "*Odierno to Soldiers: Toxic Leaders will be Fired.*"[5] The article discusses "the Army's continuing push to rid its ranks of toxic leaders" and quotes General Odierno as saying, "we are relieving people, battalion and brigade commanders for toxic leadership, and we will continue to do that."[6]

Despite these pronouncements, limited positive actions, and years of focus on toxic leadership, senior officers still exist who do not believe that toxic leadership is an issue that should result in a commander's relief. In July, 2014 the rear detachment commander of Fort Carson suspended a battalion commander after substantial allegations of toxic leadership emerged. He ordered an investigation that commenced nearly immediately. A post-brigade command colonel from a different post conducted the investigation. The investigation was exhaustive, with sixty-six officers, senior non-commissioned officers, and soldiers in key positions interviewed. The investigation revealed additional instances of toxic and negative leadership and substantiated those already alleged. Those substantiated allegations included "constant belittling and humiliation" of subordinates, "incessant profanity used directly towards" subordinates, "throwing items during meetings", to include an instance of hurling a hardcover notebook at a junior officer. The subject commander is quoted as saying, "you want toxic, I'll show you toxic," and in her own statement submitted to the investigating officer she describes her

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[4] Walter Ulmer, "Toxic Leadership: What Are We Talking About?," *Army Magazine* June 2012 (2012): 48.

[5] "Odierno to Soldiers: Toxic Leaders Will Be Fired," *Army Times*, accessed March 16, 2015, http://archive.armytimes.com/article/20130401/NEWS/304010009/Odierno-soldiers-Toxic-leaders-will-fired.

[6] Ibid.

subordinates as "slackers" and blames them for the climate of the organization.[7] The investigating

officer's findings describe an environment of "intimidation" where subordinate leaders are in fear

of "being reprimanded or fired on a daily basis."[8] He concludes that the subject commander, "has

created an adverse, toxic environment with her consistent words and actions and the organization

suffers as a result."[9] Due to the severity of the battalion commander's actions and the state of the

command climate in the unit, the investigating officer recommended the battalion commander's

relief from command.

Given the Army's professed focus on toxic leadership, along with the seriousness and

rarity of an investigating officer recommending a relief-for-cause of a sitting battalion

commander, one might expect that the battalion commander would be relieved and likely retired.

This was not the case. The commanding general, having in the interim returned from the

division's deployment, wrote in the *Action by Appointing Authority* section of the report form,

"Findings are approved, recommendations will be taken under advisement."[10] The statement

"findings are approved" means that the commanding general did not question the truthfulness of

the investigating officer's findings. The commanding general then immediately placed the subject

officer back in command. The division's public affairs officer issued a statement saying the

commanding general "had not lost faith" in the battalion commander in question.[11]

There is, of course, the possibility that there is more to this story than is conveyed by the

report of the investigation. But taken on its face, with only the information contained in the

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[7] "US Army 15-6 Investigation into the Command Climate of 1/25 Aviation" (US Army, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO, 2014).

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] "Suspended Helicopter Unit Leaders Return; Report Recommended They Be Fired," *Army Times*, accessed April 2, 2015, http://archive.armytimes.com/article/20141027/NEWS/310270052/Suspended-helicopter-unit-leaders-return-report-recommended-they-fired.

report, one cannot but conclude that the commanding general in question does not view toxic leadership or an abysmal command climate as characteristics of leadership that cause him to lose confidence in his subordinate commanders. This seems starkly at odds with the Army's public pronouncements on the subject and only serves to further highlight the problems with trying to reduce toxic leadership.

While it is laudable that the Army is making limited attempts to address the failures of this subset of officers, the Army must explore if they can do more to prevent the selection of these leaders in the first place. After years of struggling to formally define toxic leadership, the Army's most recent version of Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* does so thoroughly, if not succinctly.

> Toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance. This leader lacks concern for others and the climate of the organization, which leads to short- and long-term negative effects. The toxic leader operates with an inflated sense of self-worth and from acute self-interest. Toxic leaders consistently use dysfunctional behaviors to deceive, intimidate, coerce, or unfairly punish others to get what they want for themselves. The negative leader completes short-term requirements by operating at the bottom of the continuum of commitment, where followers respond to the positional power of their leader to fulfill requests.[12]

The effects of toxic leadership on soldier well-being and unit morale have been the focus of much of the discussion around toxic leadership in the past. Those are certainly legitimate concerns and that discussion has merit, but there is an additional and more immediate reason to be concerned with the Army's inability to address toxic and unethical leadership. Army leadership doctrine describes a philosophy of mission command based on mutual trust and decentralized initiative as the cornerstone of its leadership approach.[13] Army operational doctrine further states that Army

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[12] Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 3.

[13] ADP 6-0, 1.

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leaders execute the Army's core competencies through the application of mission command.[14] Trust is a foundational requirement for the conduct of mission command and the ability to build environments of trust is central to the Army's leadership requirements model. A toxic leader, by definition, is one that cannot build an environment of trust. When viewed in this light, the effects of a toxic or unethical leader present a more immediate operational problem. If trust is a requirement for mission command and mission command is a requirement for Army leaders to execute the Army's core competencies, then how can the Army better develop and evaluate officers to optimize the force for mission command? That is the research question this monograph will seek to answer.

To determine what changes to the current system might improve the Army's ability to select leaders optimized for mission command it will be necessary to first examine what type of officer the Army purports to want. The next step will be to ask if the Army's leadership development efforts and selection processes are adequate to the task of producing those leaders. This monograph will examine the relationship between the Army's leadership doctrine and operating concept to determine if the Army links the two in a manner that supports a broad understanding of the type of leader required. Following that, an examination of leader development will determine if the Army provides sufficient self-development opportunity and tools to allow leaders to reach the goal the Army has set in its leadership doctrine. Next, working under an assumption that no self-development program will be 100% effective, this monograph will examine the formal evaluation system's ability to weed out toxic leaders. Then, based on conclusions drawn from the examination of leader self-development and the evaluation system, this paper will recommend changes to the current environment, and possible obstacles to those changes, to more closely align the Army's leader selection process to optimize leaders for mission command.

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[14] ADP 3-0, iii.

In an effort to logically step through the research and recommendations without too much digression, it will be necessary to define some common terms and concepts up front. Because the concept of multi-rater feedback (MRF) plays a central role in this project, the monograph will discuss the Army's Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) program at some length. MRF researchers have unfortunately cluttered the field with overlapping and redundant terms. For the purpose of this monograph the term multi-rater feedback is inclusive of, and synonymous with, the terms 360-feedback, 360-review(s), multi-source feedback, multi-source assessment, full-circle feedback, and upward feedback.[15] Multi-rater feedback accurately captures the intent of all these terms and, if necessary, can be applied to any other term that signifies accepting feedback for the purposes of either development or evaluation from more than one source. The reader may consider any of these terms used in a quotation synonymous with MRF.

The discussion of MRF in the Army will involve a review of the MSAF program and its component assessment instruments, and a review of the formal evaluation system. As each of these requires similar components, e.g. raters (feedback providers) and rated individuals, different terms are required for the MSAF program and the formal evaluation system. When discussing the Army's formal evaluation system the conventional terms of *rater, senior-rater* and *rated officer* will be used to maintain consistency between this document and the Army's normal use of those terms.[16] When discussing the Army's MSAF program, the term *MSAF subject-officer*, will equate to rated officer and the term *MSAF-Rater* will refer to the peer and subordinate raters alike. The MSAF program has no counterpart to the formal evaluation system's senior rater role, so the term *senior rater* will always refer to the formal evaluation system.

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[15] Michael Armstrong, *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice*, 12th ed. (London ; Philadelphia: Kogan Page, 2012). 159-160.

[16] Army Regulation (AR) 623-3, *Evaluation Reporting System* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 7-15.

What Kind of Leader Does the Army Require?

The Army is clear in published doctrine as to the type of leader it wants. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership*, the capstone leadership publication, provides an overview of leadership as the Army sees it and previews the leadership requirements model. The leadership requirements model communicates the "underlying logic of army leadership" by describing what "leaders need to be, know and do."[17] This section will show that the Army successfully aligns leadership doctrine with the requirements of mission command. To do so it will be necessary to review each of the primary leadership and mission command doctrinal publications to show internal consistency between them, and to describe how leadership doctrine supports mission command. Additionally, a look at two foundational constructs of leadership doctrine, the Army values and the Army professional ethic, will round out the picture of what the Army expects of its leaders.

First, a review of the leadership requirements of mission command will help to show why the Army wants the type of leader described in its leadership doctrine. Mission command is the "exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations."[18] Mission command has two component parts; the art of command, and the science of control. Potentially confusing, doctrine titles each of these component parts "mission command," like the overarching concept. The "art of command" refers to the philosophy of mission command "as an essentially human endeavor" where "successful commanders understand that their leadership directs the development of teams and helps to establish mutual trust and shared understanding throughout the force."[19] The art component of

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[17] ADP 6-22, 5.

[18] ADP 6-0, 1.

[19] ADP 6-0, 1-4.

mission command is rooted in the German *Auftragstaktik*, which essentially translates as *mission-type tactics.*[20] Like the original German concept, the Army's art of command depends on the issuance of missions; ensuring subordinates understand the commander's intent, instead of on the execution of a predetermined set of tasks. The 'science of control' component of Mission Command refers to its role as a war-fighting function, which "provides purpose and direction to the other war fighting functions," integrating them into a coherent whole."[21]

Mission command, inclusive of both its subordinate components, is central to the Army's operating concept. Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet 525-3-1 *The U.S. Army Operating Concept*, describes an environment where "the Army executes its core competencies through the conduct of mission command."[22] The Army's core competencies of wide area security and combined arms maneuver are the broadest categories of mission types in the Army lexicon.[23] They describe the way the Army operates and the types of missions it is always prepared to undertake. From this it follows that, if the Army contends mission command is at the heart of its philosophy of command and, in its role as a war-fighting function, is the means by which it implements the Army core competencies, one could conclude that the Army's leadership doctrine attempts to produce the type of leaders best able to conduct mission command.

The first principle in the conduct of mission command is to "build cohesive teams through mutual trust" because the conduct of mission command requires a deeply embedded culture of organizational trust to function.[24] Mission command requires trust in subordinate

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[20] Pryor, Douglas LTC, "Growing Leaders Who Practice Mission Command and Win the Peace," *Military Review* November-December 2013 (2013): 31–41.

[21] ADP 6-0*,* 1-4.

[22] Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The Army Operating Concept* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014). iii.

[23] ADP 3-0, 5.

[24] ADP 6-0, 6.

leaders to take "disciplined initiative within the commander's intent," thus allowing them to seize

unforeseen opportunities.[25] Mission Command doctrine states that "the nature of military

operations requires responsibility and decision-making at the point of action. Leaders and

subordinates who exercise initiative, within the commander's intent, create opportunity by taking

action to develop the situation."[26] It is for this reason that the Army not only focuses on trust

within its organizations, but also on the more basic behavioral traits that support environments of

trust. The following excerpt from ADP 6-0, *Mission Command* leaves little doubt as to what the

Army expects;

> Trust must flow throughout the chain of command. To function effectively, commanders
> must trust their subordinates, and subordinates must trust their commanders. Subordinates
> are more willing to exercise initiative when they believe their commander trusts them.
> They will also be more willing to exercise initiative if they believe their higher
> commander will accept and support the outcome of their decisions. Likewise,
> commanders delegate greater authority to subordinates whose judgment they trust.[27]

Vertically and horizontally, implicit and explicit, the conduct of mission command is always

dependent upon an environment of trust.

A short review of Army leadership doctrine will show whether the Army aims to develop

the kind of leader that Mission Command doctrine requires. The Army defines leadership as "the

process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction and motivation to accomplish the

mission and improve the organization."[28] The ideal officer lives the Army values and the Army's

professional ethic. ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership* directs leaders to "internalize the Army's values,

demonstrate unimpeachable integrity and character, and remain truthful in word and deed.

Soldiers trust their leaders. Leaders must never break that trust, as trust is the bedrock of our

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[25] ADP 6-0, 1.

[26] Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6.0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 2012. 1-2.

[27] Ibid., 2-2.

[28] ADP 6-22, 1.

profession."[29] The Army's leadership requirements model is the component of *Army Leadership* that, eponymously, defines what the Army requires of a leader. The leadership requirements model details the list of attributes an Army leader must possess to develop the competencies required. This model describes a leader who "embraces the Army values and professional ethic and gets results by building trust and fostering a positive climate."[30] It is important to note that the model lists the attributes first, then the competencies. This ordering is not by mistake or without meaning. The intent of the funnel-like visual construct of the model is to show that the attributes are a necessary precondition to building the competencies. Therefore, according to this leadership construct, one could not "lead others, build trust, create a positive environment, and get results" without first possessing the necessary precedent attributes that make achievement of those competencies possible.[31] The title of this formulation of leadership is, appropriately, trait-based leadership. The specific traits, or attributes, that the Army requires are expressed in the leadership requirements model as the Army values and, more broadly, as the Army professional ethic.

Adherence to the Army values "is what being a Soldier is all about."[32] The Army values are the first entry in the leadership requirements model's character section. This is indicative of the centrality of the Army values to the character of leaders required in the profession and identifies the Army values as the foundational attributes that Army leaders must possess. The Army values are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.[33] Loyalty is required to the nation, embodied by the US constitution, the Army, an individual's

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[29] ADP 6-22, Forward.

30 Ibid., iii.

31 Ibid.

32 Army.mil, "Army Values," accessed January 27, 2015, http://www.army.mil/values/.

[33] Ibid.

unit, and an individual's fellow Soldiers. The order in which the leadership requirements model lists the objects of an Army leader's loyalty is specific and meaningful. The model specifies loyalty to the Army and its ethic over loyalty to a particular leader so that no single person or group can breach the values or ethic without accountability. Duty means fulfilling one's obligations not only for the individual but also for your team. Like duty, selfless service and respect each involve the subordination of the self to the extrinsic ethic. Honor and integrity both speak to the daily task of living the Army values over time and how this behavior reinforces expectations that those values will be adhered to in the future. The environment created by living the Army values is characterized by its predictability and the expectation by all members that the values are shared and the likelihood that one member would purposefully harm another is minimized. This organizational stability is a precondition for the level of trust necessary to conduct mission command.

The Army professional ethic fulfills a similar purpose, but applies more broadly than the Army values. The Army professional ethic is,

> expressed in law, Army Values, creeds, oaths, ethos, and shared beliefs embedded within Army culture. It inspires and motivates the conduct of Army Professionals -- Soldiers and Army Civilians -- who are bound together in common, moral purpose. It expresses the standard and expectation for all of us to make right decisions and to take right actions at all times. It is the heart of our shared professional identity, our sense of who we are, our purpose in life, and why and how we serve the American people.[34]

As the Army values drive individual behavior toward creating environments of trust, the Army professional ethic broadens the scope to the full canon of documentation that binds the Army together in a shared purpose.

While some components of Army doctrine can display conflicting priorities, the doctrine authors successfully link *Army Leadership* and *Mission Command* in both purpose and method. The logic trail from mission command as the key to execution of core competencies, through

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[34] "Living the Army Ethic AAOP, CAPE," accessed December 5, 2014, http://cape.army.mil/aaop/living-the-army-ethic/index.php.

leadership doctrine that defines the type of leader required for mission command, to the subordinate attributes that the leader must possess, is clear, well written, and logical. This link between the Army's leadership doctrine and mission command is the lodestone for understanding what the Army says it wants in a leader.

Does the Army Develop the Type of Leaders that Army Doctrine Requires?

If there is agreement on the leader attributes required for mission command, two follow-on questions naturally follow. First, how good is the Army at developing the required traits in leaders and, second, how good is the Army at identifying leaders who lag in their development, and subsequently preventing them from gaining positions of significant responsibility?[35] This section and the next will review the Army's leader development efforts and evaluation system to determine answers to both questions. The Army's doctrinal leader development has three pillars; operational, institutional, and self-development.[36] Operational leader development is formal training conducted at facilities like the combat training centers. The informal component is the training conducted every day as senior leaders influence junior leaders during the conduct of daily tasks. Institutional leader development is the task of the professional military education (PME) system. All soldiers participate in PME, from the Primary Leadership Development Course for specialists pending promotion to sergeant, to the Army War College for colonels.

Self-development is composed of those education and developmental efforts initiated and conducted by the individual. Self-development efforts range from self-study reading and on-line courses to programs like the MSAF. Each of these pillars provides both a development opportunity for the individual leader and a window through which to view the leader in terms of his demonstrated leadership attributes and competencies. An Army leader receives feedback from all pillars of leader development both informally through in-stride guidance, and formally through the evaluation system. Within this three-pillared development construct, how does the Army focus specifically on trait leadership as expressed in the Army values and professional ethic to develop leaders optimized for mission command?

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[35] Significant responsibility is defined here as command at the LTC and COL level.

[36] ADRP 6-22, 7-9.

While institutional and operational leader development can help to identify where a leader might fail to meet the Army values or professional ethic, self-development programs like the MSAF are more likely to initiate the type of positive behavioral change required. The previous section concluded that a leader is more likely to possess the ability to build environments of trust necessary for mission command if he has internalized the character attributes of the Army values and has further built the competencies required by the leadership requirements model. The Center for Army Leadership, backed up by some of the Army's most senior general officers, contends that MRF is the best readily available means for Army leaders to improve their capability as trait-based leaders.

GEN David Perkins, the TRADOC commander, said recently "we are always, as leaders, being watched and people are taking notes. It is the leadership style they remember more than the tactical or operational event of the time."[37] General Odierno recently stated,

> I believe that multi-dimensional feedback is an important component to holistic leader development. By encouraging input from peers, subordinates and superiors alike, leaders can better "see themselves" and increase self awareness. A 360-degree approach applies equally to junior leaders at the squad, platoon, and company level as well as to senior leaders. The ability to receive honest and candid feedback, in an anonymous manner, is a great opportunity to facilitate positive leadership growth.[38]

LTG Robert Brown, the CAC commanding, commented prior to launch of the Commander 360 program that it "creates the opportunity for commanders and raters to engage in more informed discussions about capabilities, performance, and development."[39]

As foreshadowed in the introduction, the MSAF program will play a central role in this research. But before looking at the MSAF program in particular, it will be necessary to conduct a

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[37] Center for Army Leadership, "MSAF Testimonials," *MSAF Testimonials*, last modified April 2, 2015, accessed April 2, 2015, http://msaf.army.mil/Home/Testimonials.aspx.

[38] Army.mil, "Army Implements New Self-Awareness Program for Commanders, Article, The United States Army," accessed December 8, 2014, http://www.army.mil/article/134580/.

[39] Ibid.

quick review of the field of multi-rater feedback as a whole to help explain why the MSAF

program is constructed as it is. Multi-rater feedback is a specific form of employee appraisal and

assessment used for both retrospective assessment purposes and as a springboard for further

employee development. Organizations generally administer MRF through a comprehensive

questionnaire distributed to individuals connected to the individual under assessment, as a direct

report, a direct manager, a colleague, or a wider stakeholder such as a customer or other outside

agent. The rationale behind this comprehensive approach is to gain appreciation for where an

employee may have particular strengths and weaknesses that can either be mitigated or further

developed. Practitioners in the field universally agree that this multiple perspective approach

produces a more accurate view of the individual.[40]

On the downside, MRF is a costly and resource intensive approach to assessment.

Although there are generic questionnaires available produced by reputable organizations, research

demonstrates that MRF is more effective when it involves bespoke instruments that are directly

related either to an employee's performance or their job function, and takes into account the

culture of the parent organization.[41] MRF has consistently proven to be an effective means of

assessment and, as such, the commercial market for MRF products and services has grown

exponentially over the last 20 years despite the cost.[42]

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[40] Angelo DeNisi and Caitlin E. Smith, "Performance Appraisal, Performance
Management, and Firm-Level Performance: A Review, a Proposed Model, and New Directions
for Future Research," *The Academy of Management Annals* 8, no. 1 (January 2014): 127–179.

[41] Frederick P Morganson, Troy V Mumford, and Michael A. Campion, "Coming Full
Circle: Using Research and Practice to Address 27 Questions About 360-Degree Feedback
Programs," *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* #3 (2005): 196–209.

[42] David Bracken, Carol W. Timmreck, and Allan H. Church, eds., *The Handbook of
Multisource Feedback: The Comprehensive Resource for Designing and Implementing MSF
Processes*, 1st ed., The Jossey-Bass business & management series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass,
2001), 502-504.

There are other potential pitfalls of using a MRF program. Even the most emotionally mature and self-aware individuals can find it difficult to accept feedback perceived as criticism.[43] This manifests itself more in smaller teams where the consensus as to the subject individual derives from a small number of MRF raters. Effectively, the small size of the group negates the anonymity that is central to the concept of most MRF programs. Working conditions, environment, and, most importantly, senior leader support for the program all play a role in an organization's perception of the effectiveness of an MRF program. As such, certain fields lend themselves more readily to an MRF approach to development and assessment than others. If a particular job function requires technical excellence that can only be acquired over time on the basis of experience, then perhaps an opinion on competence of the subject individual from a significantly more junior MRF rater would hold less weight.[44] Conversely, if an organization is attempting to discern a subject individual's ability to work well with others then any MRF rater with whom the subject individual had interacted should be able to provide useful input.

No discussion of MRF could be complete without a review of what proponents of MRF term the *great debate.* This debate is the fissure in the field between those who are convinced that organizations should use MRF solely for development purposes versus those who contend that organizations can use MRF successfully for both development and evaluation.[45] Both schools agree that the goal of MRF is to initiate positive behavioral change in the recipient and that MRF provides a much more accurate view of an individual than a subjective, supervisor-only evaluation system. With those two agreements as a starting point, the development-only school

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[43] Hilla Peretz and Fried Yitzhak, "National Cultures, Performance Appraisal Practices, and Organizational Absenteeism and Turnover: A Study across 21 Countries," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 97, no. #2 (2012): 448–464.

[44] Kristina Potocnik and Fried Yitzhak, "Assessing Innovation: A 360-Degree Appraisal Study," *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* 20, no. #4 (2012): 497–509.

[45] Bracken, Timmreck, and Church, *The Handbook of Multisource Feedback*, 4158.

contends that, to be successful at changing behavior, MRF feedback must be of "verifiable quality" so that the recipient will accept the feedback and initiate the desired behavioral change.[46] Components that effect the perception of "quality" feedback include the amount of training about the MRF program, the degree of senior leader support for the program, and the overall culture of the organization. The development-only school argues that if the recipient views the feedback data as invalid, or of low quality, he is less likely to accept the feedback and therefore avoid the desired behavioral change.

The opposing school, those who see the MRF as useful for both development and evaluation school, largely agree with the development-only school up to this point. They diverge at the definition of purpose. The MRF-for-both school seeks positive behavioral change, just like the development-only school, but as a means of providing an organization with the best leaders, not as an end-goal in and of itself. The development-only school contends that feedback data cannot meet sufficient quality requirements if the MRF-rater population knows that their organization will use the feedback they provide for evaluation purposes. The MRF-for-both school counters that organizational training and support for an MRF program can mitigate the propensity of individual MRF raters to skew feedback when used for evaluation.[47] The tension between the two schools is an important component of any MRF research and a consideration in the design and use of any MRF program. As demonstrated below, the MSAF program walks a fine line between the two schools.

While there are instances in both the operational and institutional leader development realms where multi-rater feedback is used, they are more informal than the MSAF. The Command and General Staff College (CGSC) currently uses peer reviews in both classroom and exercise

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[46] Center for Creative Leadership, *Should 360-Degree Feedback Be Used Only for Developmental Purposes?*, ed. David Bracken (Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership, 1997), 1.

[47] Ibid., 12.

settings. Likewise, observer-controllers at the combat training centers solicit informal feedback

on key individuals from a variety of sources inside the unit and share that feedback with both the

individual and the chain of command. The School for Command Preparation, a sub-directorate of

CGSC charged with preparing officers selected for command at the LTC and COL level, uses a

robust multi-rater feedback tool provided by a private company staffed with former general

officers.[48] This program's effectiveness is somewhat limited in that the rated officer picks those

who rate him, much like the MSAF program's individual assessment. This is not optimal because

it potentially allows a subject officer to eliminate feedback from MRF-raters whom he believes

might be critical of him. Additionally, while the program does provide an interview with a general

officer coach after the assessment is complete, there is no on-going accountability or follow up.

Each of these examples meets the basic definition of multi-rater feedback, but the informality,

lack of standardization, and failure to utilize the resulting data in any meaningful way across the

force means that the Army cannot accurately estimate the resulting impact on mission command.

More importantly, the consistency of the relief data over the last twelve years indicates that these

informal systems, while they might have had some positive effects, have not resulted in a

downward trend in reliefs.

As in the examples above, the Army informally uses peer evaluations in several different

ways, but the use of multi-rater feedback in a program-of-record using assessment tools

developed and administered by industrial and behavioral psychologists is new with the MSAF

program. The Center for Army Leadership (CAL), a directorate of the Combined Arms Center at

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, administers the MSAF tools. The MSAF raft of tools contains the

individual assessment, Unit 360, and Commander 360. The individual assessment requires the

Army leader to select groups of subordinates, peers, and superiors to provide "unbiased and

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[48] True Growth, "LWMIII Consulting," accessed April 13, 2015,
http://www.lwmiiiconsulting.com/lawson-magruder/.

objective feedback from multiple sources on perceived leadership strengths and developmental

needs to give the MSAF-subject officer more personal insight into themselves."[49] Army leaders

widely refer to the individual assessment as the *'MSAF'* through transferring the program name to

the individual assessment instrument. The Unit 360 is a command climate survey conducted at

the request of a unit commander, the results of which are available only to the requesting

commander. As the purpose here is to review self-development opportunities that effect current

and future LTC and COL-level commanders, the focus will be the individual assessment and the

Commander 360.

The Commander 360 program leverages multi-rater feedback to enhance leadership

growth and to increase rater involvement in the development process by, for the first time,

involving the subject officer's rater in the developmental process. Only Centralized Selection List

(CSL) lieutenant colonels and colonels participate in the Commander 360.[50] The program

officially began on October 1, 2014 but CAL conducted a pilot program in the summer of 2013.

LTC and COL-level commanders are required to participate in two assessment events over the

course of their command, generally about two years. The leader conducts the assessment on an

AKO-like web portal and asks raters to grade the subject officer on "observable behaviors that are

aligned with army leadership doctrine, key mission command principles and boots-on-the-ground

experience."[51] The measurement instrument for the Commander 360 is substantially different

from the individual MSAF assessment in that the Commander 360 "is tailored to the specific

[49] Center for Army Leadership, "MSAF Testimonials." accessed April 1, 2015, http://msaf.army.mil/Home/Testimonials.aspx.

[50] Army Times, "360-Degree Evals for Commanders Start Oct. 1," *Army Times*, accessed December 8, 2014, http://archive.armytimes.com/article/20131228/CAREERS03/312230028/360-degree-evals-commanders-start-Oct-1.

[51] Ibid.

demands and challenges of the command role."[52] Also different from the individual assessment, the subject officer does not pick MRF raters; the subject officer's rater picks them.

The decisions to both release the results of the assessment to the subject officer's official rater and to require a mandatory developmental discussion between the two is a departure from the previous MSAF tools. The CAL Director maintains that the Commander 360 instruments "are developmental assessments that are not to replace or sway evaluations of performance or potential" and adds, "the results of the assessment will not be used as part of the officer evaluation system, nor will it be shown to the commander's senior rater."[53] Dr. Jon Falleson, one of the creators of the Commander 360, states that General Odierno was adamant that the Commander 360 program bring "accountability to the developmental efforts" by sharing the results of the Commander 360 with the subject officer's rater, but not with the senior rater.[54] It is clear that the senior officer corps intends to portray the Commander 360 as consistent with the rest of the program (i.e. as developmental only). However, it is difficult to argue that by making the data available to the subject officer's rater that information from the Commander 360 might not be used by that rater in his formal evaluation of the subject officer. In this way the Commander 360 has subtly but undeniably crossed the line in the *great debate* between being purely developmental to having the potential to affect the subject officer's formal evaluation.

The general perception of the effectiveness of the program varies, and as with any individual development efforts, an officer will achieve benefit that is more positive if he believes both that the process will provide valuable feedback and has the personal and emotional capacity

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Army Times, "360-Degree Evals for Commanders Start Oct. 1," *Army Times*, accessed December 8, 2014, http://archive.armytimes.com/article/20131228/CAREERS03/312230028/360-degree-evals-commanders-start-Oct-1.

[54] Army.mil, "Army Implements New Self-Awareness Program for Commanders," accessed April 1, 2015, http://www.army.mil/article/134580/.

for behavioral change. It is ultimately impossible to determine the degree to which self-development efforts are effective. That answer will vary directly in proportion with the level of participation; it is literally different for every person who uses the MSAF program's tools. What can be determined without question is that those that do not take part in the training will receive no benefit from it. On this subject, CAL's statistics are not promising. Only fifty-four percent of active component leaders have even initiated an assessment. Many fewer have completed one.[55]

This section set out to answer the question, how good is the Army at developing the leadership traits that support mission command? The review of the MRF field overall, then the review of the use of MRF in Army leader development, both support the conclusion that Army leaders are offered substantial opportunity for self-development. The data from CAL's annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) supports the contention that those Army leaders who take advantage of self-development programs such as the MSAF can benefit substantially from the effort through raising awareness of one's own behavior and the resulting positive behavioral change efforts expected of Army professionals. While the completion of an MSAF program individual assessment is mandatory, the data from CAL also confirms that many Army leaders simply do not comply with the directive and thus gain no benefit from the program, no matter how well designed.

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[55] Data provided by Dr. Katie Gunther, Research Psychologist, Center for Army Leadership (CAL).

Does the Army Evaluate Leaders for the Traits Required by Mission Command?

If leader self-development efforts are sufficient for those officers willing to take advantage of them, then it is necessary to look at the effectiveness of the current evaluation system in grading for the leader attributes required by mission command. As the statistics in the preceding section indicate, despite what the Army says it wants in leaders, many officers still eschew self-development. Further, the relief data confirms that the Army continues to select a consistent percentage of leaders who are incapable of building the environments of trust that mission command requires. Since the relief data makes clear that the current evaluation system is not capable of weeding out toxic leaders to a degree that would reduce the problem, the purpose of this section is to examine why. To do so it will be necessary to review the current evaluation system, with the focus on the evaluation system's ability to identify the absence of those leader attributes necessary for mission command. Due to the recent change in evaluation report format, it will be necessary to review both the obsolete Department of the Army (DA) Form 67-9, Officer Evaluation Report, and the new DA Field Grade Plate Evaluation.

As one would expect given the neatly nested leadership and mission command doctrine, both the old and new forms require raters to comment on the rated officer's adherence to Army values. The character section for DA Form 67-9 is relatively formulaic, providing only the opportunity to identify *Yes* or *No* answers.[56] The character section for the new Field Grade Plate evaluation has moved away from an all-or-nothing approach to evaluating an officer's fitness in this regard, by offering the opportunity for descriptive prose comment on the rated officers' adherence to the Army values.[57] At least one reason for the change away from the dichotomous nature of the old report is that it was nearly impossible to actually record a *No* selection for the rated officer short of a felony conviction. Even then, if the rated officer made full use of the

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[56] AR 623-3, 27-28.

[57] Ibid.

appeals process, it might take up to two years for the evaluation report to be posted to the rated officer's personnel file. If during that appeals period a promotion or selection board convened, the board would not consider the negative evaluation report under appeal. Thus statutory protection of the rated officer, with the multiple levels of appeals available, meant that an officer given a *NO* check-box might actually be promoted before the evaluation report was posted to his file. While there is no publically available data to prove it, the difficulty in dealing with the administrative requirements of an appeals process likely artificially drove the number of negative reports down. The appeals process, detailed in AR 600-8-2, describes a review process with twenty-two steps. The Army's Human Resources Command (HRC) confirms that the incidence of recording a *No* in the character section of old report, or any negative information in the current report is exceedingly rare. Of the over one million officer evaluation reports processed over the last 10 years, a period roughly coinciding with the period covering the relief data, less than 2% contained negative evaluations of a rated officer's character.[58] This is starkly at odds with both the relief data and the findings of toxic and unethical behavior from the CASAL study.

While one might hope that the method of recording negative character information in the new form would improve propensity to report the incidence of toxic leadership, the fact that the new report exists under the same statutory appeals framework indicates that it would not. AR 600-8-2 states that any negative comment in the character section of the new report would require referral to the rated officer under the same appeals process.[59] So while the new report provides a rater the opportunity to be more specific about negative information included in the report, it is unlikely to increase the number or percentage of reports that identify toxic or unethical leaders.

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[58] Data provided by Mr. David Grifee, Program Manager, Human Resources Command (HRC) (AHRC=PDV-PO), Officer Evaluations Branch.

[59] AR 600-8-2, 13.

As both the CASAL and relief data indicate, this lack of adherence to the Army values and professional ethic very highly correlates with the absence of an environment of trust and, consequently, a lack of ability to conduct mission command.[60] In addition to the lack of improvement through self-development, the evaluation system, despite attempting to grade for character, is not causing the percentage of reliefs to trend downward. The conclusion from both these inferences is that, while self-development likely will work for those officers who genuinely take part in the MSAF program, an unacceptably high percentage of officers who fail in creating environments of trust simply do not take advantage of the opportunity to improve. Finally, the Army has not constructed the evaluation system in such a way to winnow those officers out of contention for CSL command selection.

Before concluding it will be necessary to review the conclusions from the examinations of leader self-development and the evaluation system. First, based on the relief data, there should be little doubt that the evaluation system, while possibly weeding out some bad actors, is not effective in reducing toxic leadership. While the new evaluation form has not been in effect long enough to assess any changes it might engender in the system, the fact that it operates under the same statutory framework as the previous report would indicate that it would have little impact. While the evaluation system does not seem to be improving the trend, the Army's self-development efforts indicate more progress. Evidence provided from the MSAF program shows anecdotal proof that participants are more aware of the impact of their own behavior on their subordinates by the program. A battalion commander notes of the individual 360 review that, "he believed it so important and so useful a tool that it would warrant being placed on a long-range training calendar and targeted as a key training event for the year."[61] Another stated that, "while

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[60] Jon Falleson et al., "2011 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership: Main Findings" (Government Printing Office, 2012). 19-22.

[61] Center for Army Leadership, "MSAF Testimonials," accessed April 1, 2015, http://msaf.army.mil/Home/Testimonials.aspx.

he was skeptical it first, that he cannot recommend it highly enough" and that his only regret was

"that they were not able to survey more leaders within the brigade."[62]

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[62] Center for Army Leadership, "MSAF Testimonials." accessed April 1, 2015, http://msaf.army.mil/Home/Testimonials.aspx.

Conclusion

The data supporting the positive effects of the MSAF program as a whole, and the early positive feedback for the Commander 360, supports the conclusion that, when coupled with a post-review development plan and involvement by a senior leader, that multi-rater feedback can be effective for the Army in providing leaders optimized for mission command. The Army's problem then, is not that it does not have the means to improve leader self-development, but that the lack of participation cripples those efforts. As the CAL participation data demonstrated, only about half of eligible captains and majors have met the requirement to conduct an individual MSAF. This monograph offers two recommendations intended to improve the Army's ability to select leaders optimized for mission command.

The first recommendation addresses the lack of participation and subsequent lack of accountability. For much the same reason that GEN Odierno insisted on greater accountability for the Commander 360, the Army should put systems in place to ensure participation in the MSAF program as a whole. These systems should ensure that raters complete post-review development plans with the involvement of the subject officer. In short, the Army should apply the same rules to the individual assessment that GEN Odierno insisted be applied to the Commander 360. In capturing the performance of current majors and company commanders in adherence to the Army values and Army professional ethic, the Army would gain the opportunity to view the subject officers through the lens of their subordinates and peers and could then offer the opportunity for development before the subject officer pool approaches selection for battalion command. As the participation data shows, many officers are already taking advantage of the program for self-improvement, but a nearly equal number are not. It is reasonable to think that not only would those not taking part benefit from mandatory participation in the MSAF program, but those already taking part would benefit to a greater degree if they had a chance, or requirement, to jointly construct a self-development plan with their rater based on the results of the individual assessment. A tightening of the rules of the MSAF program's individual assessment to bring it

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more in line with the Commander's 360 would further link the MSAF program to the leader requirements model. This should not only improve behavioral self-awareness in the subject officer pool, but also provide a more complete picture of the subject officer to his rater. A change of this type would more closely align the leader development system with what our leadership doctrine says we want.

To support this change the Army must address two specific issues. First, the target audience of both subject officers and potential MRF raters must receive better and more formal training on the MSAF program than is currently afforded. The *Handbook for Multi-Source Feedback* cites the importance of the process of multi-rater feedback as a whole system, to include program intent, instrument design, data collection, analysis, post-survey development plan, each of which is necessary for the program to function effectively.[63] Failure of the system can occur at any point along the spectrum. The MSAF program is well designed in so much as it meets these industry standards. However, for MRF raters to provide feedback to the subject officer that is most closely associated with the conduct of mission command, the MRF rater pool should receive instruction on the intent of the program and their professional responsibility within that system. This training need not be an onerous requirement on either CAL or the operational Army. The MSAF instruments are web-based tools, and the required training could be as well. Importantly, using a web-based training method could ensure, through common access card credentials, that each leader serving as a MRF-rater conducts the training to standard. CAL could easily change the technical implementation of the MSAF instruments so that an MRF rater would not be able to take part in either an individual or Commander 360 events if he had not completed the required training modules. A system of this type would hew closely to the parameters for success outlined by Bracken, et al. in the *Handbook for Multi-Source Feedback*.

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[63] Bracken, Timmreck, and Church, *The Handbook of Multisource Feedback*, 396.

Another facet that the participation data seems to show is that, until the MSAF program is more embedded in the Army's culture, a higher focus on accountability will be required. The method used by the now obsolete DA 67-1 was to indicate in a single block that the rated officer had begun an individual MSAF survey. Unfortunately, there was no requirement to actually complete the assessment, much less that an individual development plan had been constructed and subsequent counseling based on that plan be conducted. This must change. While the new OER format does contain a block to indicate that the rated officer has completed an individual MSAF survey, this is not enough. The arc of research in the MRF field is virtually unanimous that the post-survey development plan based on the results of the survey is the most important component in driving positive behavioral change.[64] Given this, the Army's accountability system should track more than the completion of the survey, again, much like the Commander 360. While tracking completion and effectiveness for a particular rated officer of post-survey development plans might be difficult inside the evaluation system due to timing considerations, it could be conducted on a continuing basis on each unit's monthly Unit Status Report (USR).

The USR is a monthly reporting requirement to the Secretary of Defense, through the major commands, which addresses mission readiness through the assessment of specified metrics.[65] While the USR at times has been fraught with inaccurate reporting, and even purposely false reporting, it is still the most robust and culturally embedded reporting system in the Army. Adding data points to the USR which track completion of post-survey development plans and counseling would serve as a forcing function to make those activities occur on a more consistent basis. Some will argue that this method will turn counseling into a pro-forma or check-the-block type exercise. This is always a risk with data reported on the USR, but at least leader development via the MSAF program would be a tracked item.

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[64] Center for Creative Leadership, *Should 360-Degree Feedback Be Used Only for Developmental Purposes?*.

[65] AR 220-1, 1.

The act of holding commanders accountable to meet a specific percentage of counseling will transmit the Army leadership's message that developing leaders is vitally important. The Army can hardly do worse. The CASAL study quoted earlier indicates that only thirty percent of surveyed individuals receive evaluation counseling.[66] This logic proceeds on the assumption that most senior officers are not failing to counsel their juniors out of a lack of understanding of leader development, but that the counseling simply gives way to the seemingly more pressing demands of daily operations. Adding the metrics to the USR would be an indication of the increasing focus on leader development by the Army's senior leadership. This might finally give leader development the importance of, for example, the oil change status for wheeled vehicles or the number of soldiers who skipped their last dental appointment.

Since the Army's MSAF program works in raising the subject officer's awareness of his own behavior, and in doing so improves the leader population for mission command, then the argument that the Army increase participation and accountability for the program should be easily acceptable. The next recommendation will likely be more problematic for some readers. As the example in the introduction from Fort Carson detailed, there remains in the Army a population of senior officers who think toxic leadership is simply a 'style' of leadership. These officers tend to either ignore, or worse, encourage toxic leadership. When this behavior is combined with a rating error named the similar-to-me effect, the potential for reducing toxic leadership is harmed significantly.

The similar-to-me effect is a rating error that describes an environment where leaders further the interests of subordinates who are most like them. When practiced by a toxic leader, the similar-to-me effect can be doubly damaging. It can not only alter the behavior of junior officers by reinforcing negative behavior, but it can also more directly affect the next generation of leaders through the formal evaluation system. For example, brigade commanders pick future

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[66] Falleson et al., "2011 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership: Main Findings," 13.

battalion commanders from the population of majors in their brigade by means of the formal evaluation system. Inside this construct, a brigade commander whose behavior meets the definition of a toxic can, with relative impunity, ensure the promotion and command selection for several future battalion commanders from within his brigade who might display the same negative behavior. The same is true of a division commander selecting future brigade commanders. While there is no way to make a positive causal link between the similar-to-me effect and the consistency in relief data over the last twenty years, it is surely true that toxic senior officers picking leaders like them for advancement is not helping optimize the population for mission command.

This monograph's second recommendation addresses the combination of senior officers that do not view toxic leadership as a problem, and the propensity of leaders to further the interests of those most like themselves. A solution for this intertwined set of problems is to broaden the picture of an officer reviewed for command by including multi-rater feedback data in command selection board files. The best method to accomplish this is to make use of the data already collected by the MSAF program's individual assessment and Commander 360. Any system for providing MRF data on each officer to a command selection board will have to be constructed in a joint effort by CAL and HRC, but the tools and systems for instrument design and survey completion are already in place and the data is already being collected. CAL ensured a broad focus for the Commander 360, as is appropriate for a feedback instrument intended primarily as a development tool. However, for a command selection board to gain an appreciation for a subject officer's ability to engender environments of trust one need only focus on the subset of data from the individual assessment and Commander 360 that evaluates adherence to the Army values and Army professional ethic. It is this subset of data that will most clearly indicate an officer's potential for mission command, therefore it is this data that should concern a command selection board most. The current evaluation system already captures, within the statutory constraints of the system, what the rater and senior rater view as a subject officer's potential.

However, given the importance of this particular aspect of the evaluation, the Army should broaden the picture of the subject officer that a command selection board sees. By allowing MRF data to be evaluated by command selection boards the Army would institutionalize a level of trust in its mid-level officer corps that has to date not been accomplished.

Some will quickly argue that a company commander or a battalion operations officer, for example, are not qualified to comment on the competence of a battalion commander. While this may be true to some extent, it is irrelevant to the situation the Army currently faces. Commanders are not primarily being relieved for issues of competence. They are being relieved for issues of character, and those issues of character are manifested in the absence of adherence to the Army values and Army professional ethic. If the Army is truly looking for leaders who can build environments of trust through the positive leadership traits described in the leadership requirements model, should they not ask if a leader is trusted not only by his rater but also by his subordinates? Mission command, after all, does require both. A company commander may be unable to accurately judge the competence of his battalion commander, but he can tell you if he trusts his commander and he can tell you if he works in a command climate that manifests positive behavioral traits. If the Army knows the type of leader it wants, and they recognize how they are statistically failing to provide them, then there should be little doubt that the current, supervisor-only, evaluation system does not support the Army's goal to identify the best leaders for mission command.

Some may still contend that using developmental systems for evaluation will dilute the quality and usefulness of the data collected. However, one can argue that the Army has already breeched this fault line by sharing the results of the Commander 360 with the subject officer's rater. As is obvious from this recommendation, this monograph contends that the distinction between MRF for development only, or for both development and assessment is a false choice. If one is convinced that the Army should develop leaders for the traits required by mission command, then how can one justify not measuring the success of those leader development

efforts? The review of the evaluation system demonstrated that, as currently constructed, it is not successful at identifying and culling those leaders who do not meet the tenets of the leadership requirements model. Something else is required. The Army's goal should not be a one-or-the-other, development versus evaluation, solution for MRF, but a construct where development efforts are graded by the formal evaluation system which in turn then provides further development goals, all in a mutually compatible and symbiotic process. While early research in the field hewed to the bifurcated, one-or-the-other role for MRF, recent research supports a more comprehensive method.

The *Handbook for Multi-Source Feedback* provides a useful, and helpfully condensed, look at the move from development-only to what they call using MRF for "decision purposes."[67] One of the components of the first recommendation provided earlier was to, like the Commander 360, open the MSAF program's individual assessment to the subject officer's rater to construct a post-review development plan. Research completed by Atwater and Rousch concludes that feedback from as broad a variety of sources as possible "reduces the natural tendency of people to feel threatened by the feedback," and that this lack of threat produces "a reduced anxiety that leads to more accurate self-assessment," which is then correlated to a greater acceptance of the feedback itself.[68] Important to note is that this inducement to behavioral change is not present in most leaders if the feedback is not shared with those in a supervisory role.[69] This fact is of primary importance if the Army is to induce behavioral change in the broad population.

This monograph set out to determine what the Army might do to reduce the persistence of toxic and unethical leadership and thus reduce the effects of toxic and unethical leadership on the Army's ability to conduct mission command. The monograph found that the Army's MSAF

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[67] Bracken, Timmreck, and Church, *The Handbook of Multisource Feedback*, 3626.

[68] Ibid., 3653.

[69] Center for Creative Leadership, *Should 360-Degree Feedback Be Used Only for Developmental Purposes?*, 15.

program should continue to be effective at improving mission command for those leaders who take part, but that accountability should be increased to ensure maximum participation. It also concluded that the evaluation system is unable to cull substandard leaders. From those findings, the author recommends two changes. The first is to increase accountability in the Army's self-development efforts by applying the same rules for the MSAF program's Commander 360 to the individual assessment, thus bringing a potential future commander's rater into the development process earlier than the current system allows. The second recommendation is to broaden the view of a candidate for command to selection boards by including MRF data taken from Commander 360s and individual assessments, and making that data available to command selection boards.

The idea of using MRF for both promotion and command selection is hardly new. What is new with this monograph is the idea of using the existing MSAF Commander 360 and individual assessment as a part of the command selection process. Previous recommendations to use MRF as a tool in command selection required the development of stand-alone tools and programs, with all the associated costs. Now however, the MSAF programs are universally embedded in leader development requirements and robust enough to serve as tools for command selection. The research reviewed here supports the contention that the Army should see a reduction in toxic and unethical leadership in command positions if they adopted these recommendations. Further, these recommendations would institutionalize a level of trust in the officer corps that to this date the Army has failed to accomplish. Implementation of the type of MRF system described in this monograph's second recommendation would require the senior officer corps to relinquish sole control, through the supervisor-only evaluations system, and institutionalize the trust of mid-level officers whose collective assessment of a future commander would be seen by command selection boards independent of the formal evaluation system. Enacting this recommendation would send a strong message to the force. Mission command requires trust both vertically and horizontally, the Army requires leaders who can build that trust,

and the Army will trust its professional officer corps across the board in selecting leaders for command.

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